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Border

GUAJIRA OFFICIAL EXPLAINS VENEZUELAN BORDER VIOLATION

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[Text] Yesterday, the governor of Guajira, Dr Jacobo Marquez Iguaran, told this newspaper that the incident which occurred in Castilletes, on Venezuelan territory, was unintentionally caused by Antidrug Police helicopters at a time when units from that agency were carrying out an operation against drug traffickers active in the border zone.

"It was all due to a mistake, when Antidrug Police units were engaged in an operation in that area, but it had no consequences, because as soon as they realized that they were in territory of the neighboring country, they proceeded to turn back. Contributing to this situation was the fact that there are no exact, visible demarcations on the strip of land separating the two countries."

Marquez Iguaran also commented on other topics of concern to Guajira, such as the disturbing rise in the drug traffic in his department, and the construction of the highway between Paraguachon and Castilletes, the latter being the site where the unintentional police invasion took place.

The governor claimed to have no official word of any protest made by the Venezuelan Government regarding the aforementioned incident.

'They Use Us As a Springboard'

Marquez Iguaran declared that, during the past few days, the Antidrug Police have been engaged in intense activity to curb the growing drug traffic in Guajira.

"I am, personally, very much concerned over what is happening, because the police are constantly seizing large amounts of drugs. It has become quite clear that the drug traffickers are using Guajira as a springboard, because neither cocaine nor marijuana is produced here. They are bringing those drugs from other parts of the country to ship them to the international markets, particularly in the United States. The marijuana comes mainly from the Perija mountains, where there are sizable plantations."

Governor Marquez Iguaran cited the blows dealt by the Antidrug Police against the drug traffickers last week, when there were seizures of 1,043 kilograms of cocaine and 9,200 kilograms of marijuana in the Punta Gallinas area, where an

However, apparently the bosses managed to escape through a special exit in the basement of the residence.

Important Seizures

The operation was not entirely unsuccessful. They found 4 million in cash in one car and personal correspondence that could compromise many people from different Antioquia sectors. They even tried to recover this documentation.

At least three Mercedes Benz cars, five others of different makes, two machine guns and several revolvers and pistols were seized.

The commander of the Fourth Brigade, Gen Rafael Padilla, will determine the legal situation of the captured bodyguards since the crimes of drug traffic and related crimes come under military justice during a state of siege.

Frequent Visits

After this action, many people have said that Pablo Emilio Escobar Gaviria and Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha, known as El Mexicano--also wanted for extradition --have been seen on various occasions at a residence in the municipality of La Ceja.

Similar stories have circulated about a farm they might use in Palmira, Valle.

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airplane was confiscated. He said that another small plane had been seized in Puerto Bolivar.

While we were talking with the official, we received a report that the police had just seized an additional 28,500 kilograms of pressed and raw marijuana in the Maticas area, in the jurisdiction of Riohacha.

He remarked: "Yes, I have been informed about the matter; it involves the seizure of a considerable volume. I might tell you that, last week, the police confiscated 100 drums of acetone, which we immediately proceeded to burn; because its shipment is dangerous and we don't want a repetition of the Pasto affair. The Armed Forces don't like to be responsible for transporting substances of that type either."

Furthermore, Marquez Iguaran appeared greatly interested in the construction of the highway between Paraguachon and Castilletes; noting that, precisely because of the lack of visible, definite signs, there were incidents such as the one which just happened in Castilletes. With regard to the existing project for executing that project, last week the head of the Guajira Assembly, architect Eduardo Abuchaibe Lopez, made statements to this newspaper.

The governor said: "With the valuable assistance offered us by the military engineers, we intend to begin that work next year, for which purpose the government has already arranged for the pertinent budgetary appropriations. It considered this a vitally important project for the department, especially since it is a border area. The municipality of Maicao has also committed itself to the execution of this project."

As for the planned dam on the Rancheria River, Marquez Iguaran said that the Italian Government had offered its backing to carry out the feasibility studies, while the World Bank has shown special interest in accomplishing this project.

The governor commented: "I have emphasized the fact that the water from this dam will be used essentially for human consumption and, later, it will be used for irrigation."

Vega Uribe and the Incident

The minister of national defense, Gen Miguel Vega Uribe, told reporters yesterday, while leaving Narino House, that the Colombian police helicopters had obviously penetrated Venezuelan territory, but unintentionally, because they failed to discern the border signs.

Sources from the National Police also told EL ESPECTADOR that the penetration of Venezuelan territory occurred unintentionally, during the course of the anti-drug operation which ended with the seizure of 1,043 kilograms of cocaine and 9,200 of marijuana. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs declined to make any comment in this regard, awaiting the announced protest from the Venezuelan Government which had not occurred as of yesterday afternoon.

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